

Marriage
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did vote against Amendment One, in part, he said, because he was concerned about the ramifications for children in unwed families. Jenkins said he also objected to the delivery of the Amendment One message, which largely appealed to the values of Christian voters. Jenkins said politicians used a hot-button issue to manipulate Christians.

"If they're going to use the Scriptures to say that this (same-sex marriage) is not condoned by God, then I want to see the same voice and vehemence when it comes to poverty and racism and sexism, which are all more frequently addressed by the bible," he declared.

For Mary Jamis, a client strategist for M Creative marketing firm, Amendment One was personal. She has spent the last 13 years in a loving relationship with her partner, Starr Johnson.

Jamis and Johnson were among the same-sex couples who protested the passage of the amendment last week by requesting marriage licenses at the office of the Forsyth County Register of Deeds. All of the couples were denied and some, including Jamis, were arrested for refusing to leave the office without a license.

"I was looking discrimination right in the eye by doing that," said Jamis. "It was a very powerful experience."

Though she was disappointed that the majority of North Carolinians dismissed same sex marriages in the Amendment One vote, Jamis said she was encouraged by President Obama's comments the following day.

"I'm so incredibly proud of our president," she stated. "I have tremendous respect for him in making that bold statement."

President Obama, who earlier ended the military's longstanding Don't Ask, Don't Tell policy, has breathed new life into the campaign for marriage equality, Jamis said.

"My fear after the primary was that people would take their yard signs down and forget about it," Jamis said. "He has given this conversation the continued momentum that we need. (His comments) have kept this conversation front and center, and we have additional momentum behind our efforts to achieve full equality."

Dr. John Dinan, a political science professor at Wake Forest University, believes that Vice President Joe Biden forced the president to take a stand on the issue when Biden spoke out in support of same-sex marriage during a May 6 episode of NBC's "Meet the Press."

"The president, if he didn't clarify his position, was going to be besieged by questions everywhere he went," Dinan said. "...There were also some big money donors who were hesitant about supporting the campaign unless he took a clear position on same-sex marriage."

Many have speculated on the impact the president's support of same-sex marriage



Top: Mary Jamis (left) and her longtime partner Starr Johnson request a marriage license at the Forsyth Register of Deeds Office. Above: Marriage equality supporters have their say outside of the Register of Deeds Office.



John Dinan

"It is my hope that it does not affect the vote in a negative manner," Aaron said. "... If anything, that should make us more supportive of him, choosing not to discriminate against anyone. Having known the history of what's happened to people of color in America, I think that's healthy."

Texas native Tameicka Clear, a lesbian and outspoken advocate for LGBT rights, said she was glad President Obama finally took a strong stance on the issue. She believes it will help increase his support among



Tameicka Clear

LGBT voters.

"I do think that it was time for somebody with some clout, somebody with some influence to say that this is ridiculous," Clear remarked. "It's about rights. It's not about religion."

Clear, who will graduate from Salem College on

Saturday, was laid off from her job two years ago and is currently uninsured. Though she cares about marriage equality, Clear, who is launching her own business, CLEAR-Understanding, said she is more concerned with issues such as unemployment and healthcare.

"I know that it needs to be a focus but I can't say that it definitely needs to be a chief focus," Clear said of marriage equality. "There's so much more to my identity and my personality than my sexuality."

Jamis said the Amendment One vote - which according to Dinan faced more opposition than in nine of the 10 other Southern states that have voted on the issue - is proof that the same-sex marriage issue cannot be left up to the states.

"The walkaway is that we will not fix this on a state to state level," Jamis said. "We have to move to a federal level in order to achieve full marriage equality."

will have on his campaign. Dinan said it's too soon to know whether the president's stance will help or hurt his bid for reelection.

Rev. Darryl Aaron, pastor of First Baptist Church on Highland Avenue, said he doesn't think President Obama's stance on marriage equality would hurt his support in the black community.

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